

# Information about BIRTH CONTROL PILLS (“THE PILL”)

## ***How do pills work?***

Birth control pills are made up of two hormones. These hormones may prevent pregnancy by:

- Keeping the body from releasing an egg that could be fertilized by a man’s sperm
- Causing changes in the cervical mucus making it more difficult for a man’s sperm to enter the uterus (womb)

## ***How well do pills work?***

Birth control pills work very well if you take them the right way. For every 1,000 women taking birth control pills perfectly, only 3 will become pregnant. They do not work if you do not follow the directions your doctor or nurse gives you.

Start taking a new package of pills the very next day after you finish a package. Each pack usually has 28 pills. The last seven pills do not have any medicine (hormones) in them. They are put in the pill pack to keep you in the habit of taking a pill every day.

## ***Is there anyone who should not take birth control pills?***

Most women take pills without having any problems. Women age 35 and older who smoke 15 or more cigarettes a day probably should not take pills.

## ***You should not take birth control pills if:***

- You are pregnant or think you may be pregnant

- You have very bad pain in your chest or legs
- You have very bad headaches (migraines with aura) or dizziness
- You have uncontrolled high blood pressure
- You have ever had a heart attack, stroke or blood clots
- The whites of your eyes look yellow or you have ever had liver tumors
- You have or had breast or other cancer
- You have bleeding from your vagina and do not know why



## ***How do you take birth control pills?***

To begin taking the pill  
You can start your first pack of pills:

- First day your period starts;
- First Sunday after your period starts; or,
- At a time determined by your doctor or nurse.

**I should begin taking pills on:** \_\_\_\_\_

The pill is taken by mouth and swallowed every day. You should try to take the pill close to the same time every day. They work best this way.

Some women feel sick if they take their pill first thing in the morning. If you do feel sick, take the pill with dinner or at bedtime. If you are taking any other drug or medicine, tell your doctor or nurse.

Some medicines make birth control pills not work as well. If you have the flu, vomit (throw-up), or have diarrhea, the pills might not work as well. Use condoms or another birth control method until your next period.

If you are having surgery, let your doctor or nurse know so that he or she can determine if you need to stop taking pills some time before the surgery.

## ***What if I forget to take the pill?***

If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember. It is OK to take 2 pills at the same time. Use condoms or another birth control method for the next 7 days.

If you forget 2 or more pills take 2 pills as soon as you remember and take 2 pills the next day. Then return to taking 1 pill every day. Use condoms or another birth control method for the next 7 days.

If you miss 3 or more pills, throw out that pack of pills and start a new pack. Use condoms or another birth control method for the next 7 days.

If you miss taking even 1 pill, you might have bleeding or spot bleeding. This is normal.

## Information about BIRTH CONTROL PILLS (“THE PILL”), continued

### ***What are some side effects I may have after starting birth control pills?***

The first or second month after starting pills, you may have extra bleeding or spotting in-between your periods. This is normal and should stop after you have been on pills a few months.

Your periods may be so light on pills that there is only a brown stain or you may miss your period 1 or 2 times a year. If you think you forgot any pills that month, you might be pregnant. If you did not forget any pills, do not worry.

### ***Call the doctor or nurse if you miss 2 periods in a row.***

You could have mood swings or get depressed while on pills. If this happens, tell the doctor or nurse. You may need to switch to another pill. If you are thinking about stopping your pills, call your doctor or nurse to talk about it before you stop taking them.

### ***Will I have problems if I take pills?***

Most women do not have problems when they take birth control pills. A very few women may have blood clots in the legs, liver tumors, or high blood pressure after taking the pill. If you have a problem, you may only need a different kind of pill.

### ***How do I know if I have a problem from taking pills?***

If you have any of the warning signs below, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away:

- **Bad pain or loss of feeling in your arms or legs**
- **Headaches, dizziness, or fainting**
- **Eye problems (flashing lights, fuzzy vision or suddenly you cannot see)**
- **Very bad pain in your lower stomach**
- **A lump in your breast**
- **Yellowing of your eyes or skin**

*Very few women have these problems*

### ***Why are pills a good choice for me?***

Birth control pills are safe for most women. Birth control pills have been used for over 30 years by millions of women. The pill does not have to be stopped to give your body a rest. Pills do not hurt your chances of having a baby in the future. Pills do not cause birth defects.

Some of the benefits of using birth control pills are:

- Your periods may be shorter and lighter.
- Your chance of having a pregnancy in your tubes decreases.
- Your chance of getting cancer in your ovaries and uterus decreases.
- Your periods should come at the same time each month and be less painful.

### ***Can I breastfeed while taking birth control pills?***

**Yes!** You may use birth control pills after being informed about the chance of your milk supply being reduced. If breastfeeding only and using a birth control method with estrogen, only begin to use 6 weeks after your baby is born and your milk supply is well established.

It is recommended that breastfeeding women use progestin-only methods; such as, “the Shot”, like Depo-Provera, progestin-containing IUS, like Mirena, or the Minipill.

### ***Where can I get birth control pills?***

You can get pills or a prescription for pills at your local health department, a family planning clinic or a doctor’s office

### ***If you are thinking about stopping use of the birth control pill!***

Before you stop taking the birth control pill, call your doctor or nurse to talk about it.

#### **REMEMBER:**

*Birth control pills will not protect you against HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections. Use condoms to protect yourself each time you have sex.*

***If you have any questions, call us at:***

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